

---

**THE SENTIMENTS AND CONDUCT BECOMING  
BRITONS IN THE PRESENT CONJUNCTURE;**

A

**S E R M O N.**

---

10  
Re  
se

*695.9.6  
18*

12 Gl

THE SENTIMENTS AND CONDUCT BECOMING  
BRITONS IN THE PRESENT CONJUNCTURE;

A

S E R M O N,

Preached in the CHURCH of CANONGATE,  
on occasion of the  
GENERAL NATIONAL FAST,  
February 27. 1794,

*From JOEL i. 6.—15.*

---

By ROBERT WALKER, F. R. S. E.

SENIOR MINISTER OF CANONGATE, AND CHAPLAIN OF  
THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF EDINBURGH.

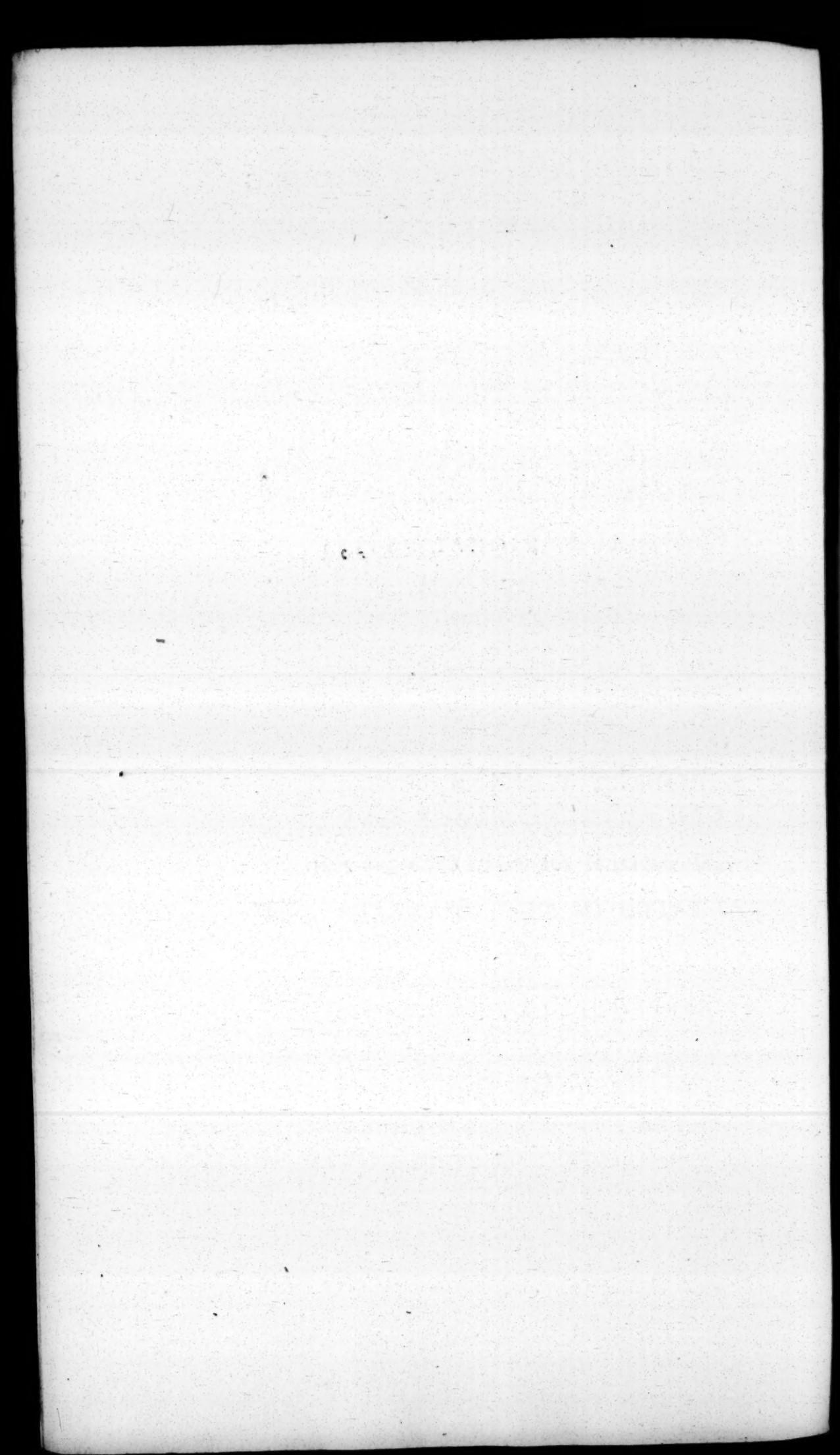
---

EDINBURGH:

PRINTED FOR WILLIAM CREECH.

---

1794.



TO  
Sir WILLIAM FORBES of Pitligo,  
Bart. Chairman,

The DEPUTY-CHAIRMEN, and  
DIRECTORS of the CHAMBER of  
COMMERCE of EDINBURGH;

THIS SERMON,  
MEANT TO STRENGTHEN THE  
PRINCIPLES,  
WHICH ALONE  
CAN PRODUCE PEACE AND  
GOOD ORDER IN SOCIETY ;—AND  
GOOD FAITH IN THE TRANSACTIONS  
OF MFN,  
IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

By the  
A U T H O R.

1880-1881

1880-1881

1880-1881

A

S E R M O N, &c.

---

JOEL i. 6.—14.

6. For a nation is come up upon my land, strong and without number, whose teeth *are* the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion.
7. He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig-tree: He hath made it clean bare, and cast *it* away; the branches thereof are made white.
8. Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.
9. The meat-offering and the drink-offering is cut off from the house of the LORD; the priests, the LORD's ministers, mourn.
10. The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: The new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth.
11. Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen: Howl, O ye vine-dressers, for the wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished.
12. The vine is dried up, and the fig-tree languisheth; the pomegranate-tree, the palm-tree also, and the

A

apple-

apple-tree, *even* all the trees of the field are withered; because joy is withered away from the sons of men.

13. Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests; howl, ye ministers of the altar: Come, lie all night in sack-cloth, ye ministers of my God; for the meat-offering and the drink-offering is withholden from the house of your God.
  14. Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders, *and* all the inhabitants of the land, *into* the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD.
- 

*WE* are called, in the present age, to behold the moral and political phenomena of a mighty and civilized people, formed into an artificial horde of banditti, throwing off all the restraints which have influenced men in social life, displaying a savage valour directed by a sanguinary spirit, forming rapine and destruction into a system, and perverting, to their detestable purposes, all the talents and ingenuity which they derived from their advanced stage of civilization, all

*all the refinements of art, all the discoveries  
of science \*.*

Such phenomena appear not in every age. History furnishes no examples of a like kind. Imagination itself could never have painted such a state of society existing voluntarily among men; and even now, amid the daily, and too authentic records of it, labours to conceive the possibility of those horrible scenes which it continually produces. ‘ Hear this, ye old men, and give ear all ye inhabitants of the land, hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers! Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation.’ ‘ Blow also the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in the holy mountain;—for it is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of dark-

\* *Vid.* Mr Pitt’s speech at the opening of this Session of Parliament.

‘ darkness and gloominess, a day of the  
 ‘ trumpet and alarm against the fenced ci-  
 ‘ ties and high towers. A nation hath  
 ‘ come up, even a bitter and hasty nation,  
 ‘ marching through the breadth of the  
 ‘ land, to possess dwelling places that are  
 ‘ not theirs. They come all for violence.  
 ‘ They scoff at kings, and princes are a  
 ‘ scorn unto them. A fire devoureth be-  
 ‘ fore them, and behind them a flame  
 ‘ burneth; the land is as the Garden of  
 ‘ Eden before them, and behind them a  
 ‘ desolate wilderness.’

But they shall not prevail to carry de-  
 folation through the earth. Were their  
 hosts countless as the sands of the sea, they  
 shall not prevail:—For there is one who sits  
 in heaven, who marks the counsels they  
 have devised against himself and against  
 his Anointed. ‘ The Lord holdeth them  
 ‘ in derision. He shall speak to them  
 ‘ in his wrath, and vex them in his  
 ‘ sore displeasure.’ He who says to O-  
 CEAN, when it rages, hitherto shalt thou  
 come

come and no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed, shall also curb their frantic wrath, and cause the remainder thereof to serve him.

But although we have this well founded reliance on the providence of the Most High that it shall interpose to check these impious counsels, yet is it not permitted for us to be at *our ease in Zion*, while such portentous judgments are abroad on the earth. God is speaking unto us by the voice of his providence, and the men of wisdom shall listen to the same ; ‘ they shall even hear the *rod*, and who hath appointed it.’

In conformity with this maxim of heavenly wisdom, hath our gracious Sovereign, WHOM MAY GOD SAVE, AND LONG PRESERVE, ‘ commanded that a public fast and ‘ humiliation be observed throughout the ‘ land, that the people may humble them- ‘ selves before Almighty God, in order to ‘ obtain pardon of our sins, and may, in a de- ‘ vout

‘ vout and solemn manner, send up our prayers and supplications to the Divine Majesty,  
 ‘ for averting those heavy judgments which  
 ‘ our manifold sins and provocations have  
 ‘ most justly deserved, imploring his blessing and assistance on the arms of our  
 ‘ country, towards restoring and perpetuating peace, safety, and prosperity to  
 ‘ these kingdoms :—‘ For a nation’ threatens to ‘ come up into our land, strong and  
 ‘ without number, whose teeth are the  
 ‘ teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek  
 ‘ teeth of a great lion. He hath laid his  
 ‘ own vine waste, and barked his fig-tree,  
 ‘ he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away, and the branches thereof are made  
 ‘ white. He hath cut off the meat-offering and the drink-offering from the house  
 ‘ of the Lord ; the priests, the Lord’s ministers, mourn.’—And now say the men  
 of that nation to us, Come, be our brethren in impiety, in misrule, in confusion,  
 in bloodshed, in misery, in ruin. Come, accept the kiss of fraternity entitling you

to a participation in these things, or prepare to receive them from us at the point of the sword.

But we will neither accept the traitorous salutation, nor fear to repel their frantic efforts of despair, by the steady force of an united and happy country. Putting our trust in Almighty God, we will now obey his voice, transmitted to us by that EXCELLENT PRINCE, whom he hath set over us for our good, saying, ‘ Sanctify ye a fast, call ‘ a solemn assembly, gather the elders and ‘ all the inhabitants of the land into the ‘ house of the Lord your God, and cry ‘ unto the Lord.’

May God himself grant his blessing to this solemnity, that so, while I endeavour to lay before you the words of truth, ye also, ‘ putting aside all malice, and all guile ‘ and hypocrisies, and all evil speakings, as ‘ new born babes may desire the sincere  
‘ milk

‘ milk of the word, that ye may profit thereby.’

Let us consider in what views we ought to regard ACTUAL OR IMPENDING public calamities, and what DUTIES are required of us under such visitations of providence.

The word of God, in numberless passages, teaches us to consider public calamity as a rod wielded by the hand of the Most High, to correct the nations, on account of iniquity. Although, therefore, it is rash and unjust to interpret the misfortunes of *individuals* as judgments of Heaven, it is safe and right to regard *national* calamities in this view.

Men, individually considered, are in a state of trial, not of retribution. The time cometh, indeed, when they shall be rewarded or punished precisely according to their deeds; but, in the present time, ‘ no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before him,

‘ him. All things come alike to all ; there  
 ‘ is one event to the righteous and to the  
 ‘ wicked ; to the good and to the clean, and  
 ‘ to the unclean ; to him that sacrificeth and  
 ‘ to him that sacrificeth not.’

But *public* associations of men—Nations and Kingdoms, can only experience the distributive justice of God in the present world. Death puts an end to all the bonds which unite men in communities. Almighty God, therefore, ‘ the King of nations,’ has, in the government of the world, ordained, and exemplified a *special* part of his administration, which connects present rewards and punishments with the present virtues, or vices, of nations. He has assured us, in the revelation of his will, that this is the invariable plan of his providence, and he has verified it to our observation, in many conspicuous events that have taken place on this globe.

The deluge of the old world—the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah—the destruction of the Canaanitish nations—the vicissitudes of prosperity and adversity in the history of the Jews—their captivity in Babylon—their general dispersion, *continuing to this day.*—All these events are monuments of this important truth, that ‘ Righteousness exalteth nations, while sin is the reproach and ruin of every people.’

It would seem almost impossible to resist the conviction arising from so many striking facts. Yet some men, to whom, whatever borders on what they chuse to call *Enthusiasm*, is an everlasting subject of alarm, affect to consider these events in the light of miracles, which have now confessedly ceased.

It is true, that since the publication of the gospel, we see not such broad and manifest interpositions of providence in the concerns of nations as often took place of old.

old. But this furnishes no argument to prove that the same consequences do not follow the public conduct of nations as certainly, though not always so suddenly, as before.

Let us endeavour to reason justly on this subject.

The Jewish history has given rise to many disquisitions, both on the part of the friends and the enemies of revelation: But the special view of it, to which I would solicit your attention at present, is to consider it as a MODEL, on a small scale, of the GREAT plan of PROVIDENCE, with regard to accountable agents.—It is true, that our natural conceptions of the Deity lead us to the belief, that, in the *issue* of his moral government, an exact retribution shall be finally rendered to all his intelligent creatures.—But the prospect of this final issue is remote. It is only a small part of the universal system, which falls within the

per-

personal observation of any individual; and although he should extend the sphere of his observation, as far as possible, by reading and reflection, still the annals of the world present themselves to him, chequered with many perplexing facts, difficult to be reduced to the strict ideas of present distributive justice. In the mean time the solicitations of vice are perpetually counteracting the *power of the world to come*, and leading the sinner, while he walks after his own lusts, to say, in scoffing unbelief, ‘ Where is the promise ‘ of his coming...for since the fathers fell ‘ asleep, all things continue as they were ‘ from the beginning of the creation \*.’

To prevent, or at least to render inexcuseable, this false inference from the imperceptible progress of the **GREAT SYSTEM** towards its completion, it has pleased the Author of that stupendous plan, which is only yet *beginning to be unfolded*, to set forth

\* II. Peter iii. 3. & 4.

forth to our observation a *type or model* of his moral government, in the history, revolutions, and fate of the Jewish people. We have not yet seen a GREAT REVOLUTION of providence as to the WORLD in general. In respect to this, the longest æras by which *men* compute are as nothing. ‘A thousand years are’ in the sight of HIM who conducts the whole system, ‘but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.’ But to compensate this unavoidable defect in our comprehension of the Universal System, we have seen a particular community, selected, as it were, to represent the WHOLE;—distinguished by the choicest blessings of Heaven—abusing those blessings—chastized from time to time on account of that abuse—persisting in impenitence—multiplying their provocations—at last finally rejected, and continuing under the curse to this day.

Can we seriously believe that this striking history stands recorded in the most authentic

thentic and eloquent annals given to the perusal of man, for no moral or important purpose? Can we believe that the distributive justice of God has been stern towards one people alone, and that it is lax towards all others?—He that can believe these things, is sufficiently guarded, indeed, against *Enthusiasm*; but it may be doubted whether he is sufficiently guarded against that hopeless state of mind and character, which beginning *Atheism*, produces—

But other histories, besides that of the Jews, proclaim the truth to which I now solicit your attention. It is a FACT, which none can deny, that nations do flourish or decay, according to the general prevalence of virtue or vice among the people.

The annals of the world do not furnish one instance of a people deeply corrupted, who long retained their national prosperity.

Sunk

Sunk and enervated by the habits of Eastern luxury, the great empire of *Perſia* was totally conquered by an army which, in these days, would hardly excite alarm in the most inconsiderable state of Europe.— When the same habits had corrupted *Rome*, through the influx of Eastern riches, her sons quickly prostituted the arms which had subdued the world, to fasten the chains of despotism on themselves. And it was after *Spain*, through rapine, and torture, and blood, had seized the treasures of *Mexico* and *Peru*, that she sunk into that state of weakness and depopulation, from which she is only yet beginning to emerge.

Such has hitherto been the fate of nations, considered as subjects of the distributive justice of God in the present world.

It might also be shewn, that the same consequences must flow from the very nature of man, and of society. But as the subject does not directly lead to this illustration,

tration, I will rather proceed to set before you the different purposes for which God sends various kinds and degrees of calamity to visit the nations of the earth;—adopting, in every part of this illustration, the authority of his own word.

‘ The Most High does not afflict wilfully, nor grieve the children of men;’ for, ‘ judgment is his strange work, and ‘ in mercy doth he delight.’—The still small voice of his compassion always precedes the thunder of his wrath, and even his chastisements bear marks of that paternal goodness which desires not the death of sinners.

When a people begin to forsake him, he solicits the return of their duty and allegiance, by gentle admonitions.—When these admonitions are disregarded, he sends his warning and chastening rod.—When both fail, he lays aside the tender compassions of a parent, assumes the rights of a sove-

sovereign, and vindicates the authority of his laws by the exemplary punishment of the impenitent.

1. When a people begin to forsake him, he sends his messengers or prophets to them with an embassy, similar to that of Jeremiah, saying, ‘ Thus saith the Lord, behold I frame evil against you. Return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good \*.’

If this admonition has its proper effect, the rod is suspended, and the humble penitents are restored to favour.

Thus it happened to the people of Nineveh—‘ Yet forty days,’ said God, by the mouth of the prophet Jonah, ‘ and Nineveh shall be overthrown. So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth from the

C                   ‘ greatest

\* Jerem. xviii. 11.

' greatest of them even to the least of them.  
 ' And God saw their works, that they  
 ' turned from their evil way, and God re-  
 ' pented him of the evil that he said he  
 ' would do unto them, and did it not\*.'

2. But when such admonitions fail to produce their proper effect, *other messengers* are sent, to rouse and alarm sinful nations.

From the deep and awful chambers of his justice, God brings forth vials of wrath to pour out on guilty lands. Then sends HE his ' judgments abroad on the earth.' HE commands, and the sword devours, famine consumes, pestilence rages, tempest desolates. Then appoints HE ' terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart.' Then makes he fear to enter into the hearts of rulers, and faction into the hearts of subjects, so that wisdom is darkened in the senate, and the hands

\* Jonah iii. 4. 5. & 10.

hands of men hang down in the field, and no shouts of victory are sent from the hosts, to those who stay behind in the fields and in the cities ; ‘ because they go out *one way* to meet their foes, and flee *seven ways* before them ; and men sow seed in ‘ the bitterness of their heart, lest their ‘ enemies should eat it.’

Nay, after all these things have been accomplished on such a nation, if they shall not for all this hearken, neither be reformed—God shall say of that nation—‘ I will ‘ yet punish them seven times more for ‘ their sins. And they shall eat the flesh ‘ of their sons, and the flesh of their ‘ daughters shall they eat ; and I will make ‘ their cities waste, and bring their sanctuaries into desolation, and will not smell ‘ the favour of their sweet odours. And ‘ I will draw out a sword after them.— ‘ And upon them that are left alive of ‘ them, I will send a faintness in the lands ‘ of their enemies, and the sound of a sha- ‘ ken

‘ ken leaf shall chace them, and they shall  
‘ fall when none pursueth.’

With such tremendous visitations of wrath, did God threaten his people of old, if they should despise his statutes, or break his covenant.—And is he *now*, think ye, become more lenient towards the impenitent workers of iniquity?—Is it *now* safer than it was in former times, to trespass on his goodness and long-suffering?

Affuredly this is not so.—‘ To him belongeth vengeance and recompence, and the foot of them that hate him shall slide in due time, for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.’

Listen, O ye people of this land, while yet in safety, amid your native fields and cities ye hear, *and only bear*, of the wide desolation of war in other lands.—Listen to the voice of this great and omnipotent God,

God, which now addresses you in these words : ‘ Behold as the clay is in the hands of the potter, so are ye in my hands, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it ; if that nation against whom I have pronounced turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. Return ye now every one, from your evil way, and make your ways and your doings good. Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make unto yourselves a new heart and a new spirit, for why will ye die, O house of Israel.’

3. But the Spirit of God will not always strive with man : For when a people thus solicited by reproofs, and warned by actual chastisements, still harden themselves against such calls of providence, when neither mercies nor judgments can reclaim them

them—abused long-suffering at last kindles into the hottest vengeance of Heaven. The Most High restrains his paternal compassions, and gives order to the awful ministers of his wrath. The day of merciful visitation is past, the day of consuming terrors arrives. The contemned rod is withdrawn, and the sword succeeds—the sword made sharp and bright for slaughter. Then maketh the Lord the ‘ plagues of such a ‘ people wonderful, and the plagues of their ‘ seed, even great plagues, and of long ‘ continuance, until they are left few in ‘ number, and these few scattered among ‘ all people, finding no ease nor rest to the ‘ soles of their feet.’—Then sends the Lord ‘ cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that ‘ such a nation set their hands unto for to ‘ do, until they be destroyed, and until ‘ they perish quickly, because of the wick-‘ edness of their doings, whereby they have ‘ forsaken him.’

Often

Often had the arm of the Lord been raised in anger against his antient people, and as often did his mercy interpose to delay the stroke. But a fatal period came at length, when even mercy could no longer procure a respite. ‘ Now is the end come upon my people of Israel,’ said God, ‘ I will not again pass by them any more. ‘ And the songs of the temple shall be ‘ howlings in that day ; there shall be many dead bodies in every place, they shall ‘ cast them forth with silence \*,’

In that instance, the execution followed the threatening without delay ; and that instance, were there no other in the history of the world, is an awful testimony of the *Atern*, though slow justice of HIM who rules the nations. ‘ These things happened to them for ensamples ; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come †. Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God,

\* Amos viii. 2. 3.

† I. Cor. x. 11.

‘ God, on them which fell severity, but  
 ‘ towards thee goodness, if thou continue  
 ‘ in his goodness, otherwise thou also shalt  
 ‘ be cut off\*.’

Having thus represented to you the views in which we ought to regard actual or impending public calamities, I proceed to consider the duties which are required of us under such visitations of providence.

I. Let us habitually impress on our minds those religious acknowledgements of the Divine administration, which have been represented under the former branch of the subject.

On minds destitute of religion, calamity of every kind, private or public, actual or impending, falls with ten-fold weight. Alive only to the immediate sensation of distress, they remain insensible and regardless of the hand that inflicts it. Their regret

of

\* Rom. viii. 22.

of the blessings they have lost, is unaccompanied with the least degree of remorse on account of the crimes they have committed. Overwhelmed with a sullen unfruitful dejection, their proud rebellious hearts murmur and struggle even under the hand of God.—This is the ‘ sorrow of the world ‘ that worketh death.’—With such an unhallowed sensibility, God, by the mouth of the prophet Hosea, reproacheth the Jews of old.—‘ They have not cried to me with their ‘ hearts, when they howled upon their ‘ beds ; they assemble for corn and wine, ‘ and they rebel against me—they return, ‘ but not to the Most High \*.’

Very different, in the season of calamity, from this, is the godly sorrow that arises in the heart of those who habitually acknowledge the Divine administration in all that happens, either to individuals or communities.

\* Hosea vii. 14.—16.

munities. This is the feeling of hearts less affected with the sense of suffering than with the remembrance of guilt. It is a feeling which turns every accusing sentiment against ourselves, every humble and affectionate sentiment towards our Maker. When prosperity decays, or changes to affliction, it leads men to the acknowledgement of abused benefits, and to the reflection on undeserved blessings that still remain.

—‘ The Lord hath chastened me sore, but  
 ‘ not given me over to death.—Why  
 ‘ should a living man complain, a man  
 ‘ for the punishment of his sins ?—We  
 ‘ have had fathers of our flesh who cor-  
 ‘ rected us, and we gave them reverence;  
 ‘ shall we not much rather be in subjection  
 ‘ unto the Father of Spirits, and live: For  
 ‘ they verily for a few days chastened us  
 ‘ after their own pleasure; but he for our  
 ‘ profit, that we might be partakers of his  
 ‘ holiness.’—

If

If such a frame of mind is becoming in an *individual*, if it tends to preserve his soul in the proper posture, and to insure him the benefit which affliction is intended to produce—it is not less beneficial in the same circumstances, and on the same accounts, to a *nation*. Nay, if there be in a city but **TEN** such pious and humble souls, amid *thousands* of a contrary character, it may avert the threatened vengeance of the Most High, and prevail with him to repent of the evil that he had said he would do unto that city.

II. In order to strengthen and cherish the religious views I have been recommending, let us cultivate a reverence for the ordinances of Divine worship.

Our lot has fallen in evil days. The great malignant spirit seems to have obtained permission for a season, to send forth legions of his emissaries to spread lies, to the deceiv-

deceiving of the nations. Under this influence of dæmons, men have come forward to propagate, with a more bloody zeal than Religious Fanaticism ever displayed, the doctrines—that *man individually* is degraded by the sentiments of devotion, and that *society* cannot exist in perfection, unless  
 ‘ the meat and the drink-offering be cut off  
 ‘ from the house of the Lord.’—Repressing for a moment, if possible, the horror produced even by the mention of such tenets, let us examine them as calmly as if we were arguing with their authors, in one of their own *temples of Reason.*

Let it be granted that the bulk of mankind stand in need of some restraints, to check the disorderly operation of their passions,—By what means can their passions be so effectually restrained as by a sense of religion ? Take this away, and immediately rapine, violence, confusion, and every evil work, will overspread the world.

Suppose only one effect, among many that might be named, which an irreligious spirit, diffused through the ranks of society, would inevitably produce. I mean, that all reverence for the solemnity of an oath were to be done away.—What horrible consequences would immediately ensue! All the evidence by which questions affecting the characters, properties, and lives of men are tried, would be rendered useless. In many cases of this kind, an oath is the only thing to be resorted to for putting an end to litigation and uncertainty.

But if an irreligious spirit shall have destroyed all reverence for this appeal to the omniscience of God, (and how can it fail to do this, when men are taught, that in the present life they are degraded by the sentiments of piety, and that death is eternal sleep), the truth in such circumstances can never be discovered—falsehood can never be detected—treachery will dissolve all  
the

the bands of society ;—power and emolument of every kind will naturally fall into the hands of the most abandoned villains—and the whole world will become as uninhabitable as the wretched country in which these tenets have been devised.

It may therefore be asserted, without diffidence, that whoever sets an example of impiety in his own conduct, and much more, whoever spreads the maxims of it among the multitude, is in so far an enemy to society.—If we efface from the minds of men the sense of God, as the observer and judge of all their actions, the most powerful restraints on vice, and the most prevailing incitements to virtue, will vanish along with it. Men will learn to consider the maxims of integrity as mere speculations, or at best, as only lessons of worldly prudence. The consequence must be, that they will pay no regard to them, not only in those secret transactions, where knavery defies

defies detection—but even in those open outrages against law and order, in which they can be supported by the vociferation or daggers of their associated ruffians.

I can perceive but one objection that can be made to the foregoing reasoning.—May not men, it may be asked, learn a rational system of piety by other means than by attending the ordinances of religion? May they not be taught their duty by moral reasoning, without going to church, reading the Scriptures, and keeping holy the Lord's Day?

To this it may be answered,

i. That the objection is altogether vague and inconclusive, inasmuch as it does not prove any *inexpediency* or *hurtfulness* in the means hitherto employed among Christian nations, for spreading the knowledge, and maintaining the influence, of religion

among

among men, but only *supposes* that the object may be attained without them. But if in fact it be attained, to a certain extent, at least, by them, would it be wise to hazard a doubtful experiment, when the danger is so great if it should fail?

2. There is every ground to believe, both from reasoning and fact, that if the ordinances of religion were abolished, all sense of integrity and virtue would be lost from among men.

That we do not learn our duty from mere instinct is certain. That even the most improved reason is often perplexed, in ascertaining the grounds and extent of moral obligation, is no less evident.—Allowing, then, the Scriptures to be in truth what they lay claim to be—the WORD of GOD—What an unspeakable advantage to mankind is it, to be furnished with so plain and authoritative a rule of conduct, free

from

from every ambiguity, and enforced by the most commanding sanctions ?

3. It is well known that many are deprived of the leisure, and that still more want the *inclination*, to investigate the sound meaning of the Scriptures for themselves.

Is it not then of importance, that public teachers of religion should have a place in society ?—Men who, without divesting themselves of the *character*, or secluding themselves from performing the *duties*, or enjoying the best pleasures of **CITIZENS**, devote, however, the chief attention of their lives to the study of the Sacred Oracles, that they may unfold them to their fellow creatures, for their direction and comfort.

4. Although GOD has a right to all our time, and although men of well disposed minds will keep every day, in some measure, holy to him ; yet is there not in hu-

man nature an obvious tendency to be engrossed so much with the affairs of the present life, as to forget the world to come, and the interest we have in it? What can be more salutary to man, therefore, as an IMMORTAL CREATURE, than the observance of *that Divine* statute, which ordains a day of rest from wordly employments—a day devoted to religious contemplation, and to solemn converse with GOD, and with our own hearts?

Thus stands the argument. On the one side, reason, Scripture, and experience are in favour of those who cultivate in themselves, and wish to preserve among their fellow citizens, a reverence for the ordinances of religion \*.

On the other side is *the rage for universal innovation*.

\* Si quid novisti rectius istis,  
Candidus imperti—si non, his utere mecum.

*innovation*—with the *experience* of effects  
hitherto **DISASTROUS** and **HORRIBLE**.

III. Let us study to shew a decent expression of outward manners in our present situation.

There is not a more obvious dictate of common sense, than that the same conduct which, in safe and easy circumstances, is no other than the cheerful expression of gratitude to providence, becomes, in adversity, an improper and disgusting levity. This is felt, (by spectators at least), with regard to the private calamities of individuals. When *they* continue, or affect to continue, the same self-indulgence and gaiety as formerly, in such reverses of fortune, it shocks the common sentiments of mankind.

What then is the difference between the sentiments of public anxiety, and those of private distress, which should thus provoke  
so

so much censure in the one case, and preclude even the slightest in the other?—Not in the feelings themselves surely;—for if these are to be distinguished, it must be in a respect that will aggravate the impropriety of the appearance in the former case—seeing there the concern is more generous and extensive.—But the fact is, that in this, as in many other cases, we deceive ourselves, as to the *reality* of the sentiment, and *think* that we feel for our country, while in *truth* we only approve of that feeling.

Matters of public concern are so much topics of ordinary conversation—so much agitated in companies of all descriptions, and of various degrees of candour and information, that the subject, like every other too often presented to the mind in such circumstances, becomes often insipid, sometimes irksome.—Moreover, a great part of mankind are of so light and frivolous a character, that provided you only

ly leave them, for the time, in possession of the materials of their private enjoyment, they will *feel* (whatever they may *profess*) very little real solicitude about objects of public concern.

This is the account of the *fact*.—But surely it is an account which reflects little honour on those to whom the description applies. If we speak of a person who, amid the distresses of those with whom his affections and feelings *ought* to be united, remains *insensible*, overpowering every generous emotion by a succession of private selfish enjoyments—we speak of *one* against whom all who deserve the name of HUMAN BEINGS are zealous in expressing aversion and contempt. Yet is there not, in the view of impartial reason, something not less *ungenerous* in the appearance of general levity prevailing in a NATION, while its dearest interests are at hazard—and that hazard, too, warded only by the toils and dangers of our BRETHREN, to whom

whom the duty has been allotted of ‘ turning the battle from the gate.’—Ah ! we seem little to reflect—*We* whose lot has fallen in such peaceful places, and who, with so little *gratitude*, possess all that providence can bestow on us towards HAPPINESS, that many of our BRETHREN—born to as fair and quiet expectations, and brought up with as indulgent tenderness as ourselves, are now, in our cause, struggling with hardships, perhaps encountering dangers, the least of which, even in prospect, would embitter existence to the men among us that are ‘ tender and very delicate \*.’ To these our *brethren*, that *sun* which shines on us with beams so tranquil and propitious, rolls every day a *bloody shield* through heaven : Every gale wafts to their ears the groans of death, every stream runs red with blood.

IV. Let us conduct ourselves with a *wise consideration* of the circumstances which demand

\* Deut. xxviii. 54.

demand our *chief caution* in the present conjuncture.

There *have been* times, when the man deserved best of his country, who, in his proper sphere, employed his reasoning and active faculties to check the abuse of power in the constituted authorities.—The **VERY REVERSE** is the case at present. The tide of opinion, influenced as it has been by events in the *revolutionary history of France*, and by the arts and exertions of *men among ourselves, who wish to assimilate the histories of both kingdoms*, threatens to run in a violent, though, I trust, not in a general current, towards the contrary direction.

In such circumstances, *wise and good men* will study to discern both **TIME** and **JUDGMENT**\*. In other words, *they will endeavour to correct, by a regard to what is the instant duty, in a conjuncture causing just and peculiar alarm, those opinions or judgments*

\* Ecclesiast. viii. 5.

*ments which they had adopted, while no emergency led them to weigh their probable consequences, with regard to the general welfare.*

This discrimination *should* be studied by all **good** men, and *will* be exercised by all **WISE** and **GOOD** men in the present situation of public affairs.

Every man has his peculiar sphere of influence ; and within that sphere, not only his conduct, but even his speech will have effect. Although, therefore, it is impossible not to form opinions of the public constitution and administration of government —although it is lawful to speak according to our opinions on these subjects—although a good and wise man may have opinions in his own mind, that go to the censure of particular existing imperfections in the constitution or government of the country—yet he will not (discerning, as has been said, **TIME** and **JUDGMENT**) be rash

rash in expressing, far less zealous in spreading, the influence of such opinions. He will think on what is *seasonable* and *expedient*. He will be diffident of that **ZEAL** in his own mind, which, communicated to others of less candour or information, might become *heat*, and might produce *tumult*. He will be wary of giving countenance, by his example, to the petulant and ill-designing.—Above all, he will, in the fear of God, summon his judgment to tell him what is the proper and becoming sphere of his exertions, placing before it that maxim of the wise man, ‘ As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is the man that leaveth his place \*.’

V. Let us ‘ quit ourselves like men’ under the alarms sounded by that ‘ bitter and hasty nation,’ which now sets heaven and earth at defiance.

F

Putting

\* Proverbs xxvii. 8.

Putting our trust in ALMIGHTY GOD, let us animate ourselves, and our brethren who are engaged in the same cause, by considering and acknowledging gratefully the good land *he* has given us, and the many public and private blessings, which, as inhabitants of it, we possess.

Let us take a view of the happy CONSTITUTION of our PUBLIC GOVERNMENT—a Constitution adapted equally to secure the blessings of LIBERTY and RELIGION—by virtue of which the meanest in all our land is protected from the hard hand of the *oppressor*, nor has cause to fear the *persecutor's* rage, while he worships the LORD GOD of his fathers according to his conscience—by virtue of which the Sovereign can exact no part of the property of his subjects, for any purpose, without the consent of the *Commons* of the land represented in Parliament—by virtue of which the representative body of the *Commons* of GREAT Britain

Britain in Parliament can propose no tax on their constituents, which will not affect themselves and their estates personally—by virtue of which equality of law, EQUALITY of *pretensions from virtue and talents*, the only grounds of equality which men in their senses can acknowledge, are acknowledged, and have been, in innumerable instances, exemplified in the lowest and highest conditions—by virtue of which no British subject can be tried, but for an offence against an existing law recorded, or by practice acknowledged—by virtue of which the person accused must know the *precise crime* for which he is brought before the justice of his country—by virtue of which he may plead his own cause,—employ authorised counsellors to plead for him,—or by *one request*, however late or unexpedient, obtain an order from his judges to have such counsellors appointed in his behalf—by virtue of which the amount of the evidence against him must be weighed by IMPARTIAL MEN, appointed from the

class

class of citizens nearest his own station—by virtue of which the interpretation of LAW is not committed to needy and dependent men, who might be tempted to *sell* the sacred decrees of justice, but to men provided with liberal salaries, confirmed for life; and thus removed, as far as human precaution can go, from any inducement to pervert justice—by virtue of which no suspected individual can be at once sequestered from the execution of every purpose, good or bad, by a mandate immuring him in a dungeon—by virtue of which the fair and equal trial, that has been described, must speedily follow detainment or incarceration for any alledged offence—by virtue of which it is not possible, even for the resentment of the SOVEREIGN, (should that be supposed possible) to procure that so much as ONE of these privileges of the subjects should be waved, in a case the most personal to himself.

Britons! What other liberty, What other equality would you covet ?

Cast your eyes (if they can bear the contrast) on that Government by *Revolutions*, which your enemies mean to substitute instead of that which has been represented,— to substitute by a war of invasion, and to perpetuate by the operation of the permanent instrument of death.

When ye have made the comparison, then weigh both in your understanding, and in your feelings, whether treasure— even BLOOD, can be expended in a wortier cause, than in resisting the attempts of those who would rob us of the blessings of time, and of the prospects of eternity!

**F I N I S.**

414

